

City of Milpitas
2005 State of the City Address
March 29, 2005
"Our Community Vision"

Good evening.
Thank you, Cliff, for your wonderful introduction.

Cliff is an excellent representative of our many citizens who unselfishly donate their personal time to serve as City Commissioners in Milpitas. I appreciate your taking time to join us tonight Cliff.

I'm also grateful to Bill Foulk for his beautiful rendition of the Star Spangled Banner, the Filipino-American Association of Milpitas for escorting our nation's flag and Kathryn Gray for her heartfelt invocation. The last part of the program will be the benediction and it will be by Syed Mohsin. I'd like to thank you at this time.

Again and again, thank you to the Chamber of Commerce for sponsoring tonight's event.

Most especially, thank you all for being here. Thank you for your presence and for your support of our city and our community, that's the the bottom line of all thanks. I want to thank all the others watching on the television and here at City Hall outside this room. I know you're out there because I went out there – thank you for being here.

I hope you will join us after the ceremony for light refreshments in the lobby downstairs and an opportunity to get to know one another better.

Before I begin, I would like to recognize my distinguished colleagues on the Milpitas City Council: Vice Mayor Armando Gomez, Councilmember Althea Polanski and Councilmember Debbie Giordano. I'd like to also recognize Councilmember Bob Livengood who is not here. I am grateful for your community spirit as we all work for the common good of Milpitas.

"Our Community Vision" is the theme for this year's State of the City Address. Throughout history, citizens of successful civilizations shared a common "vision" of goals and values. They worked together to improve their community and dared to try new ways of doing things and experiencing the world around them. Milpitas follows the advice of Daniel H. Burnham, the noted architect and city planner of Chicago who said, "Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men's blood...Make big plans."

Let me tell you a little about our Community Vision and what we accomplished in 2004. Then I'd like to describe where our Community Vision will take us this year and in the future.

Our work began on a solid foundation created by my predecessors on the City Council. They realized a Vision of fiscal responsibility that blesses our community with a strong economy and sound municipal budget. Because of our past leaders' foresight and daring, our City has an enviable credit rating and provides excellent services to all citizens. In fact, this last year our City again received the highest rating for a California city. Now two years in a row!

Our Community Vision is coming alive with significant projects in the Midtown area. This is an exciting time as we complete regulatory processes and see our concepts come alive in drawings and plans.

This past year the City Council approved the location and development of a three-story county health facility, the first for the City of Milpitas. We also approved a second senior housing project, and a second parking garage on North Main Street. The first parking garage is to go on the south side of the new library building just across the street.

The new library is three times the size of our current library building, it will incorporate the existing historical building at Main and Weller Streets. The integrity of the historic building will be respected and retained while providing a modern new library for all our citizens. Children will delight in the expansive new wing of the library that's all their own. Library patrons will be overjoyed with the 114 new computers and Internet access that will be available. The new library is a building project that will benefit old and young, citizens and businesses alike. This past year we completed some major milestones for the new library: we selected our architect and completed the conceptual design and environmental review.

We've also been working on the area surrounding the library so getting there will be easier and more inviting. This past year, staff completed the conceptual streetscape plans for the Midtown area. In a few years, new lighting, sidewalk furniture, landscaping, bike lanes and street median islands will make North Main Street, Abel Street, and Serra Way inviting places to walk. It will be a pedestrian-oriented area.

Further south in the Midtown area, our Planning Department is hard at work developing the details of our Community Vision for a large area surrounding the future BART station. Called the Midtown Transit Sub-Area, a conceptual plan was recently prepared with the collaboration of property owners and land developers.

In addition, the Planning Department obtained a \$150,000 grant from VTA, the Valley Transportation Agency, to prepare a transit area plan. When finished, the plan will outline how the old business district along Main Street, and property around the Great Mall, can evolve into a vibrant economic cornerstone of Milpitas with more housing and capital improvement projects.

In the private sector, over 650 homes will be built on both sides of Abel Street near the County Elmwood Jail Facility. Due to our efforts, 130 of those homes are set aside to be affordable for citizens with lower incomes

Also, buyers are clamoring for the townhouses and condominiums that began construction this year at Park Place, a high-density housing development located off Curtis Avenue just north of the Great Mall.

Though these are all significant for the Midtown area, none of them compare to what happened in transit during 2004. Not only did the light rail line begin operation in June, but the main bus transit center was relocated right across the street! As I predicted last year, Milpitas has indeed become a hub for transit riders from throughout Silicon Valley and the region.

In the midst of all this activity, we also helped plan the extension of BART through Milpitas' Midtown area and into downtown San Jose and Santa Clara. The Milpitas BART station would be conveniently located in close proximity to the light rail station and bus transit center and is estimated to carry 27,000 riders a day. The BART project will significantly change the appearance and character of Milpitas.

I would be remiss if I did not mention another major City facility located in the Midtown area. The interim Senior Center on Abel Street was completed last year with a roomy modular building and renovated hall and kitchen facility. Membership at the Center increased nine percent. Last year five new classes were added and we started a daily shuttle service from the Terrace Gardens senior housing project to the Senior Center.

As I mentioned a little earlier, because of our elected leaders' Community Vision, Milpitas is able to provide superior services to our residents and businesses. Let me tell you about some of the accomplishments in 2004 that contribute to our community's high quality of life:

- We improved communication with our residents by publishing a city newsletter that is mailed to every single household in Milpitas;
- We added new solid waste services for our residents that includes free street sweeping, annual neighborhood clean-up events, and free curbside pickup of large items for senior citizens;
- As a community, we celebrated our 50th anniversary as a City and published a popular history book about our first 50 years;

- We added Saturday morning swim lessons, started 12 new fitness classes and created a popular new fitness event called “New Year, New You”;
- We put the entire police fleet on a high-speed wireless network to increase our efficiency and responsiveness to emergencies;
- The Building Department started a new hotline for residents and contractors that provides “live” answers within three rings of the telephone;
- We initiated the “Save a Life” campaign and trained and certified 105 residents in emergency resuscitation; and,
- We subsidized recreation fees for 124 lower income families through the Recreation Assistance Program;

Of course this list is only a sampling of the new and improved services our City offered last year. As you can see, our City employees not only offer superior services but also are constantly trying to improve their accomplishments. During 2004, listen to a sample of what they did. These are amazing statistics about our public services:

- Within 30 minutes, investigated 3,500 service requests from residents for things like water meter leaks, graffiti, and traffic signal outages;
- Increased use of the Teen Center and attendance at Community Band Concerts by 20 percent each and increased enrollment in recreation classes by 12 percent;
- Resolved 1,700 code violations for neighborhood nuisances like abandoned vehicles, barking dogs, and unkempt property;
- Provided increased child care referral services with a 19 percent increase in website hits and initiation of an email network that 50 percent of the licensed child care providers in Milpitas belong to;
- And, lastly, we are proud that we achieved a remarkable 99.9 percent accuracy on water meter reads.

During 2004, our Building Department even compared their performance to five other cities, including our neighbors Fremont and San Jose. Milpitas rated above average in the number of permits issued over the counter and plan checks completed each month. In spite of the workload, Milpitas had an impressive below average wait time of five minutes at our public service counter for 9,000 annual customers. This is significantly below the average wait of 11 ½ minutes in other cities.

The safety of neighborhoods and streets is of primary importance to our residents and businesses. I’m pleased to report that in 2004, the incidence of violent crimes went down 2.4 percent. Our dedicated public safety employees conducted almost 11,000 patrol checks of potential terrorist targets like utility lines, churches, government buildings and schools. Crossing guards protected our youth at 28 different locations throughout the school year, police Explorers fingerprinted 6,000 children, and our Fire personnel trained an additional 35 residents for the SAFE program.

I think our public employees deserve a round of applause!

Next to public safety, residents are also concerned about the quality of local education. Though the City is a separate and distinct entity from the school district, we do partner with them to provide a high quality educational environment. Last year the City began funding the facility costs for the San Jose City and Evergreen Community College District to provide college classes at Milpitas High School. The City Council also funded extra hours at the High School's library to partially correct the Monday closure of the Milpitas Library by the County Library District. 2004 also saw the inauguration of the City's Raise a Reader Pilot Program at Rose and Randall Elementary Schools for pre-kindergarten children.

Milpitas residents also have an intense interest in the quality of our public facilities, especially our local parks and transportation system. Toward that end, last year we widened Piedmont Road, renovated Hall Park and the Hall Park Lagoon, resurfaced roads in our neighborhoods and athletic courts in our local parks, finished two studies for residential neighborhood speed bumps and completed significant portions of the Berryessa and Coyote Creek walking trails.

The smooth operation of freeways that intersect our community are key to maintaining the quality of life in Milpitas. Traffic often spills over, onto our local streets and neighborhoods, if these regional routes aren't operating at peak efficiency. In 2004 the Dixon Landing and Interstate 880 interchange was completed, work on the I-880 and I-237 interchange continued, and soundwall construction along interstate 680 began.

During 2005, the City Council will make major decisions that will strengthen our Community Vision. We will adopt and begin implementing an Economic Strategy Plan, make changes to our Neighborhood Beautification Ordinances, and determine the direction of the City ethics program.

The City Council will work together to ensure our Community Vision becomes reality. We will focus on maintaining fiscal responsibility to our citizens and our future. We will study the potential of an impact fee on new developments to help pay for transportation improvements, begin an update of the General Plan Housing Element, meet our goal of 20 percent affordable housing units in new residential developments, continue to provide superior public safety services by answering 911 calls within 10 seconds, and dispatch emergency calls within 60 seconds with our new Computer Aided Dispatch system.

The City Council and I will work hard to ensure that the quality of life in Milpitas continues to be good and exceed the expectations of our community. This year we began planning the 2006 rollout of a new residential recycling program that will be more convenient for our residents. We will also complete 15 projects in our Capital Improvement Program including three storm pump stations and the

rehabilitation of Singley Street. We will complete the design and permit process with Caltrans for widening the sidewalk and adding a safety fence on the Calaveras Blvd. overcrossing so it can be built next year. We will also finish the design of the new library, the parking garages, and improvements on Main Street.

And that's not all. Next year we will begin work to eventually allow our residents to obtain minor building permits from the convenience of their home computer. We'll also continue to increase the use and visibility of the Teen and Senior Centers. We will wrap-up our negotiations for the Nitrogen Gas Franchise and Telecommunication contracts. Lastly, we will update the timing of over 40 traffic signals.

As you can see, we have impressive plans and goals for the year ahead.

I'd like to tell you now about three major issues that the City Council will consider this year. All three of these issues are so significant that they will set the course on what Milpitas will be like as a community for many decades in the future.

The first issue is the design of the BART project. Major decisions on the project design will be made this year. Decisions such as how the line will cross major thoroughfares, the design of the Montague station, and whether the end station will be in Milpitas or downtown San Jose, has long term implications on the economic vitality and quality of life for surrounding properties and neighborhoods in Milpitas. It is critical that we devote the resources that are needed to support our efforts to work collaboratively with the VTA to achieve designs that meet their economic goals while enhancing our community development objectives.

The second major issue the City Council will have to address this year is, not surprisingly, the City budget. Our financial structure must be closely evaluated as expenses continue to go up and revenues stay flat or grow less than costs. This year we need to determine how we handle long-term costs associated with our labor costs. This is critical for the future financial solvency of our city. We must respect our city employees and appreciate the hard work they do. We must also maintain a balance of pay, benefits, and retirement without creating an undue financial burden for future generations.

The third major issue the City Council will need to grapple with this year, are the impacts that their decisions on housing and land development projects can have on our community. The type and number of infill projects and the pressure to grant exceptions to the General Plan can have far-reaching affects on our commercial landscape and neighborhoods.

At this point, I'd like to thank former Police Chief Charlie Lawson for recently assuming the interim city manager position for our organization. His leadership is essential to maintain our Community Vision and the enthusiasm and direction

of our employees, especially during this period of senior management transitions. With the City Council's direction, Mr. Lawson and his staff will keep the public informed about City actions and keep the best interests of the public foremost in their day-to-day operations.

While the City Council may not agree on every issue, we can agree to work together to ensure this city continues to move toward our Community Vision. I will work hard to ensure that the quality of life in Milpitas continues to be good, that our relations with the school district are enhanced even further, and that the City continues to provide quality services, from the basics of street cleaning and trash pickup, to ensuring neighborhoods look good and that people want to move to Milpitas. Our City will continue to welcome diverse cultures and everyone who lives here will feel safe. The City Council and I will work for affordable housing, appropriate infill construction, and to attract new businesses to Milpitas.

However, the City Council cannot do it all. Milpitas needs its citizens to become more involved. We need to make sure all citizens vote, that they better understand what government is doing and that they volunteer to help Milpitas grow and prosper.

Our citizens must embrace our community vision. We need a participatory electorate. While 60 percent of Milpitas citizens voted in recent general elections, less than 29 percent voted in the School Parcel Tax election a few weeks ago. We need to do better.

A more informed electorate will help. We need to encourage new and all residents of Milpitas to read the City's quarterly *Newsletter*, *Activities Guide* and the local newspaper, the *Milpitas Post*. Ideally, interested citizens will watch City Council meetings on Channel 15 or online from the City webpage.

Once informed, citizens are more likely to become directly involved in the community and learn about opportunities to be on City Commissions or take advantage of the myriad of other volunteer opportunities in our City. The better informed and involved our residents and business community are, the more they will support the hard decisions that will maintain Milpitas' vibrant economy and high quality of life.

To achieve our Community Vision, it is essential that we continue to work together. We must all be optimistic and we must be involved. Let's continue to move down new roads. Let's continue to have a bold vision for Milpitas. Let's, all roll up our sleeves and accomplish our big plans for "Our Community Vision."

Thank you for your attention. Good evening. May God bless us all.